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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4341

UNCLAS RIGA 000684

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STATE FOR G, DRL/SEA, AND NSC/DEMOC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [LG](#)

SUBJECT: LATVIA: PRESIDENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDTABLE AT 2007 UNGA

REF: STATE 125456

¶1. Reftel requests information on Post's and the GOL's efforts to promote human rights and democracy. Latvia is shifting from being a recipient of foreign aid to being a donor and is implementing a significant increase in development assistance during 2007--focused on Georgia and Moldova, with additional assistance to Ukraine, Belarus, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. The country wants to use its own post-Soviet experience to support democracy in the neighborhood and promote respect for basic freedoms. Latvia has an Embassy in Georgia and hopes to open one in Moldova as well. Moldova opened an embassy in Riga at the end of 2005.

¶2. The GOL's democracy and human rights agenda focuses specifically on Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus. Following are several examples of projects the GOL plans to fund in 2007 to promote human rights, encourage the development of civil society, and strengthen democracy.

Georgia:

- Encouragement of an active and strong NGO sector (two projects)
- Support for improvement of Georgian judicial system in the framework of international law
- Encouragement of civic participation for stronger governance

Moldova:

- Development of democratic civil society and a strong NGO sector (two projects)

Ukraine:

- Developing the Role of NGOs in implementing democratic governing principles

Belarus:

- The GOL provides funding for 4 Belarusian students to attend university in Latvia who, for political reasons, are unable to study in Belarus.

¶3. Post works closely with the GOL to support these initiatives and to coordinate them with USG efforts in the same countries. In January, Post partnered with the GOL to host members of the Georgian parliament in Riga for discussions with the Latvians on a host of issues, including human rights. Because Latvia has hands on experience as an emerging democracy, and because as a small country their initiatives on these issues can be less intimidating, Latvia's leadership in encouraging the development of democracy and the protection of human rights has been particularly helpful.

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